

We are the sons of the men who won the first victory of the Revolution at Moore's Creek Bridge ... who stained with bleeding feet the snows of Valley Forge ... and only left the service of their country when its independent sovereignty was secured. We are the brothers of men who wrote with their swords from Bethel to Bentonville the most heroic chapter in American annals and we ourselves are men who, inspired by these memories intend to preserve at the cost of our lives if necessary the heritage that is ours. We maintained it against overwhelming armies of men of our own race, shall we surrender it to a ragged rabble of negroes led by a handful of white cowards who at the first sound of conflict will seek to hide themselves from the righteous vengeance which they shall not escape? No! A thousand times no! Let them understand once and for all that we will have no more of the intolerable conditions under which we live. We are resolved to change them, if we have to choke the current of the Cape Fear with carcasses. The time for smooth words has gone by, the extremest limit of forbearance has been reached. Negro domination shall henceforth be only a shameful memory to us and an everlasting warning to those who shall ever again seek to revive it. To this declaration we are irrevocably committed and true men everywhere will hail it with a hearty Amen!

*Alfred Moore Waddell, Thalian Hall, Wilmington, N.C., October 24,*  
1898

negroes were going to rise up and kill all the whites.”<sup>30</sup> A news correspondent explained that the whites were fearful of an uprising because blacks had received “from their churches and from their lodges . . . reports of incendiary speeches, of impassioned appeals to the blacks to use the bullet that had no respect for color, and the kerosene and torch that would play havoc with the white man's cotton in bale and warehouse.” The correspondent who made this observation further explained that the fear of a black uprising was an “ostensible ground for the general display of arms” and even if the blacks were acquiescent, the whites still would have armed themselves as a tool to demonstrate their determination to win the election.<sup>31</sup> Much later in life editor Josephus Daniels acknowledged that he helped to fuel a “reign of terror” by printing stories written so as to instill fear and anger in readers.<sup>32</sup>

Because many white men feared that they could not protect their families in the event of trouble, some white women left the city before the election. For instance, Richard and Louis Meares ushered their mother to South Carolina by November 5, and James S. Worth sent his wife and children out of the city by November 3.<sup>33</sup> In her account of the riot, Wilmington resident Jane Cronly recorded that on the evening of the election, her family heard a rumor that the blacks “disappointed in having been cheated out of the election, might set fire to somebody's property.” She noted that “this fear was probably the outcome of anxiety on the part of those people, who having abused and maltreated the negroes were fearful of their just vengeance” and that the warning was false.<sup>34</sup> On the other hand, Mary Parsley of Wilmington wrote to her sister

<sup>30</sup> Keith, *Memories*, 97.

<sup>31</sup> Henry West, “The Race War in North Carolina,” *The Forum* 26 (January 1899): 580.

<sup>32</sup> Daniels published his autobiography, which detailed his involvement in Democratic Party activities as editor of the *News and Observer*, in 1941. Daniels, *Editor in Politics*, 288.

<sup>33</sup> Louis Meares to Richard Meares, November 5, 1898, Meares and de Rosset papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library, Chapel Hill; James S. Worth to Josephine Worth, November 3, 1898, James S. Worth Papers, Southern Historical Collection.

<sup>34</sup> Jane Cronly, n.d., Cronly Papers, Duke University Library, Durham.